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PREPAREDNESS: THE WAY TO PROCEED

THE ADVOCATES of so-called preparedness have overlooked one important thing. This Congress was not elected on any such issue, and has no mandate from the people or from any political party to dispense a billion of dollars in five years in the directions proposed. If a State legislature, without having been elected on any such platform or issue, were to propose to mortgage the citizens of the State to the extent of ten dollars a head, or fifty dollars per family, in a non-revenue producing enterprise, the members of such legislature would be forever condemned.

In this condition of affairs, no member of Congress can, as a representative of his constituency, vote for the pending program. There is but one method of procedure he can properly favor. He may vote for the measure proposed, with the proviso that the extraordinary provisions and expenditures shall not go into effect until the people have directly voted in their favor. Congress can further direct that at the next fall election upon every ballot there shall be inscribed in substance this proposition: "In favor of (or against) extraordinary expenditures of about one billion dollars for army and navy purposes." If a majority of the citizens of the United States then determine in favor of such proposition, every member of Congress, irrespective of his personal sentiments, will be warranted in following the instructions of the majority.

In this manner, and this manner only, can the whole question be raised above personal and party consideration and put before the people upon its naked merits.

This proposal merely extends to the nation a method of procedure common in every State of the Union. For instance, a few years ago, when the State of New York was considering the enlargement of the Erie Canal, the people by direct vote commanded the expenditure of one hundred and one million dollars, approximately the same amount per head for the people of that State as is involved in the present proposition for the people of the whole United States, although that was intended to increase, not weigh upon, the revenues. Upon the general idea of reference to the people, we have had the approval of the President, as expressed for the initiative and referendum, as well as the constant practice of seventeen States of the Union and the occasional practice of all the others.

The only possible objection that can be raised to this proposition is that it will involve a delay in national preparations. This delay need only be from July 1 of next year until the votes are counted in November; and as the President has assured us that we are not in danger at the present time, this delay cannot matter.

THE MAXIM OF NEIGHBORHOOD

IT IS no wonder that pacifists are torn in spirit over the present war situation. It is natural that we should be profoundly disturbed over our duty, especially to those across the sea. It is perfectly normal that we should fear that we may not be doing all that we should to stop the war. It is to be expected that we should resent the activities of the militarists, and, upon analysis, that we should be nettled at other pacifists who do not agree with us.

In the presence of such a situation is there any rule by which we may guide our steps? We think there is. We are of the opinion that charity must certainly begin at home; not that it must end there, if such were possible, but that at least it must begin there. "Give us this day our daily bread" is an inextinguishable part of our pater-noster. Unless we do get our daily bread we shall soon be incapacitated for helping others to get their daily bread, or daily anything else. The man who attempts to push his club, his church or fraternity, before first heeding the need of his own fireside will find that his efforts are misplaced, pathetic, and futile. To neglect real needs at home for the sake of some society or other is easily distinguishable, as a rule, as a mere spectacular display. The true leader can usually be best identified by the practical effects of his works among his own people, his own children, his brothers and sisters, his neighbors.

When A. Bronson Alcott and his party of enthusiastic social reformers began their co-operative farm near Harvard, Mass., Mr. Emerson wrote that if they did their work well, paid their bills, obtained the respect of their neighbors, and helped Harvard to a better plane of living, that then they were as safe as the sun. So the proof of the sincerity of the pacifist lies first in the effects of his work among those who know him best. If his theories win, for example, his wife, he may then try them upon the neighborhood. If they are accepted and if they help there, he may extend them to the State; then, if possible, to the nation and to the world. The maxim, therefore, is the maxim of neighborhood, by which we mean, let us help most those whom we can most help.

WHAT SHOULD PEACE SOCIETIES DO?

WE ARE in receipt of many letters asking what the peace societies should do at the present time. While we recognize that different societies, with their different constituencies, will wish to do different things, it is still true that there are certain general principles which may well guide us all. These principles may be briefly stated. The American Peace Society has the only program for the solution of the problem of war that has ever been accepted by nations and wrought, even in